

IDENTIFICATION: Adult bald eagles (*HaliaeetusLeucocephalus*) have dark bodies and wings with a distinctive white head, neck, and tail feathers. Young eagles are less distinctive, adding white feathers gradually after one year of age. Bald eagles are large birds, with body lengths of 28 - 32 inches and wingspreads of 6 to 7 feet. Eagles catch and eat fish and other prey, and will eat dead animals along lake and river shores and roadsides. Bald eagles nest in large trees, often near water. These nests are usually located near tops of the tallest trees and are added to and re-used year after year. Generally, eagles nest in Alabama during October – May but may stay on the nest until August.



FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: When forestry operations are scheduled where eagles are known or suspected to nest, inspect carefully to protect areas surrounding nest trees. If an eagle nest is spotted or suspected, halt all potentially disturbing activities immediately and notify the Alabama Department of Conservation and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Some eagles are sensitive to human activities and may abandon their nest if disturbed. Human entry, particularly when eagles are present and nesting, should be restricted. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Guidelines for the Southeast recommend restrictions of activities around known eagle nests. Although the guidelines are advisory and voluntary, following them should prevent human disturbance detrimental to eagles. Recommended restrictions include no logging or other tree cutting, road building, or use of chemicals toxic to wildlife within a zone ranging from 750 - 1500 feet around an eagle nest site. Roost trees and potential replacement nest trees are also important and should be protected the same as nest trees.

DISTRIBUTION: Bald eagles occur in several Alabama counties, usually associated with river systems, lakes, bays, and other bodies of water. Counties with recorded eagle presence include Baldwin, Barbour, Cherokee, Choctaw, Covington, Dallas, Elmore, Henry, Jackson, Lauderdale, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Morgan, Tallapoosa and Winston. Sightings have been reported in several other counties.

Photo and Text Credit: Threatened and Endangered Species of Alabama: A Guide to Assist with Forestry Activities, Second Edition, USFS



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